

market. The fact that bankers conducted the exchange of money of all countries naturally made them authorities in monetary matters. At Athens they kept accounts for their clients, which they were compelled to produce upon requisition, and their accuracy and technical knowledge led to their frequent employment for verifying the accounts of the city.

The Greeks taught banking to Rome, and the first names for bankers there were of Greek origin. The banking business at Rome was at first largely in the hands of foreigners and freedmen, but certain branches of finance were in the hands of native Romans. It was the usurious rates of interest exacted by the patricians in their business relations with the plebeians, rather than any acts of regular bankers, which led to the secession of the plebs to the Sacred Mountain in 494 and to the Janiculum in 278 B.C.<sup>1</sup> The regular bankers, the *argentarii*) were charged with the organization of the coinage by Marius Gratidianus in the first century B.C., and the work was so well done that statues were raised to the praetor who had taken the initiative in the reform. Sylla overturned the statues and put in circulation the filled money of base metal which was one of the devices of early times.<sup>3</sup> The booths of the bankers in the Forum were so conspicuous that when, in 309 B.C., the bucklers of the Samnites were brought home by the victorious Roman armies, they were ordered to be displayed with their incrustations of gold and silver above these booths in order that the people might view their splendor.<sup>3</sup> In spite of these honors, however, it was not a source of pride in Roman patrician society to be descended from the *argentarii*. Marc Antony made it a subject of derision that Augustus counted an *argentarius* among his paternal ancestors and that even on his mother's side an *argentarius* was his grandfather.<sup>4</sup>

The concentration at Rome of the control of the politics and business of the world gradually extended the scope of

<sup>1</sup> Cruchon, 40.

<sup>2</sup> Deloume, *Les Manieures <P Argent & Rome> 156.*

<sup>3</sup> Cruchon, 43.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.